

A STUDY ON THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED STUDENTS IN LADY DOAK COLLEGE

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Abstract

People with disabilities form a significant part of the world population. The exact number is hard to discern due to suspected underreporting and differences in the definition of disability between countries, and cultures. It is estimated that approximately 650 million people of the global population or ten percent of the total population, live with disability. The experience of people with disability varies depending on their personal circumstances, availability of resources and other external factors. Similarly, students with disabilities represent an emerging population in the institutions for higher education whose perceptions and experiences of higher education are ultimately shaped by their socio-cultural experiences, the existing environment, and the availability of specific facilities required by them. Despite notable progress in legislations and policies for these students in the institutions for higher education, many of them still face various challenges in completing their studies successfully. This study aims to explore factors or barriers which affect the social and educational experience of students with disabilities in Lady Doak College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: *disabilities, higher education, challenges, differently-abled, Peer Group, academic performance*

Review of Literature

It is apparent from the reviews related to the study that most of the studies were concerned with social and educational experiences, autonomy and self-determination that students with disabilities exhibit in their day-to-day life, factors influencing the successful career of these special students. Many studies have not been undertaken to know the academic performance, provisional support services available to the differently-abled students. It is pertinent to have such a study to find not only the problems faced by them but also the key factors that need to be addressed in the case of differently-abled students. Hence, the present study namely "A Study on the differently-abled students of Lady Doak College" is undertaken.

Objectives of the Study

To study the provisional support services extended to the differently-abled students by

- College and Administration
- Teachers and Department
- Peer Group

- To analyse the academic performance of the differently-abled students in Lady Doak College and the variation in academics in terms of (i) disability (ii) preference for electives and other common courses
- To analyse the involvement of differently-abled students in the co-curricular and extracurricular activities of the college
- To find the problems faced by the differently-abled students and steps taken to overcome those problems

Methodology of the Study

As per the objectives, the present study is descriptive research. There are 20 differently-abled students studying different courses in various classes departments in Lady Doak College. All the 20 students were considered for the study. Hence, it is a census study. The period of study is the current academic year 2014-15.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected from all the 20 students with the help of a pre-tested and Tamil translated questionnaire. Questions related to socio-economic and demographical background of the students were included in the questionnaire. The students were asked to state their marks in Part I, II, III and IV for all the semesters. Possible co-curricular and extracurricular activities were listed and the student respondents were asked to mention the number of times they have participated along with the levels. Statements were framed using five point scales and validated before collecting the opinion on the extended provisional support services. Possible problems were listed and the respondents were asked to rank them and point out the steps taken to overcome those problems.

Tools of Analysis

The collected data were tabulated for analysis. To study the provisional support services rendered to the respondents by the College and the administration, to identify the academic performance and involvement in the co-curricular and extracurricular activities of the college, percentage analyses were used. Scaling technique was used to study the support extended by the teachers, department and the peer group. Simple ranking technique was used to find the problems faced by the student respondents and steps taken by respondents to overcome those problems. Regression was used to test whether the academic performance of these students is influenced by the provisional support services available to them.

Major Findings of the Study

- One student among the 14 is visually challenged who is 19 years old. All the four physically challenged students belong to the age group 19-21 years. Out of the eight

students with hearing-speech impairment one student could speak but could not hear without the hearing aid.

- One respondent belongs to the science stream while remaining 13 respondents belong to the departments in arts stream. Out of the 14 respondents, one is doing Post Graduation in Social Work and the remaining 13 are Under Graduate students, equally spread over all the three years. Nine students belong to the department of Economics out of which one student is studying Economics in English Medium and the remaining eight pursue their studies in Tamil Medium. Hearing and speech impaired - exempted from Part I as per Government norms.
- Majority (78.5%) of the student respondents are from urban areas Less than 5 percentage of students come from rural areas.
- All the respondents are Hindus. Only one respondent is scheduled caste, majority of eleven respondents are backward caste and remaining two respondents are forward caste.
- 71 percentage of the respondents have own house and 29 percentage of the respondents live in a rented house.
- Respondents are categorized into three levels namely, low income group with monthly income ranging from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 20000, middle income group with income between Rs. 20000 and Rs. 30000 and high income group with income of Rs. 30000 and above.
- 57 percentage of the respondents are from low income group it is a good sign that even if their family income is low and with a differently abled child the parents could manage to give them a higher education. 29 percentage of the respondents are from high income group and remaining 14 percentage of the respondents belong to the middle income group.
- Eight out of 14 respondents spend Rs. 500 to Rs. 2500 per month for food and remaining six respondents spend Rs. 2500 and above per month for food. Nearly eight respondents' monthly expenses for transportation is Rs. 2500 and below while remaining six respondents' transportation expenses is Rs. 2500 and above. Only four out of 14 respondents are tenants and their monthly rental expense is Rs. 2500 to Rs. 5000. Remaining ten respondents reside in their own house. All the respondents spend Rs. 5000 and below towards clothing. For education purpose eleven respondents spend up to Rs. 2500 per month. Only three respondents spend Rs. 5000 and above for Education. 14 respondents utilize Rs. 2500 and below from their income for electrical usage and medical purposes respectively. Out of 14 respondents only two respondents spend up to Rs. 500 every month for meeting the expenses related to special equipments.
- One respondent is visually challenged for whom the college provides scribe and gives extra time during the examination. The provisional support rendered by the college benefited the visually challenged respondent academically. All the differently-able students are provided with a mentor by the college at the initial stage of their college

life. In that case the mentor system is really helpful for only nine respondents while remaining five respondents felt that the mentor system which is provided by the college is not helpful. Out of 14 respondents only five, respondents are physically challenged and require Ramp, Lift and Western style Rest Room for whom the college provides the facilities respectively. Learning facilities such as library, computers are provided by the college and only nine students are satisfied with these facilities. Half of the respondent feels that there is a sociable environment when they approach the college administration for paying fees, attendance related quires, receiving mark sheet from the examination office. Out of 14 respondents only one respondent has got wheel chair from the college administration which helps in migrating inside the college.

- 10 six respondents feel that the mentor-mentee system is useful for them remaining eight respondents feel that the peer group is not helpful for improving their academic performance. Seven respondents feel that the peer groups are lending their helping hands and remaining same proportion of the respondents feel that their peer group is not lending their hands to help them academically. Seven respondents expressed that their friends give them moral support while remaining same proportion of the respondents feel that their peer group is not supporting them. Overall eight respondents reveal that they get support from their peer group.
- Six respondents are able to speak, write and read English though they are differently-abled. The disability doesn't stop the respondents from learning another language English.
- One respondent has successfully completed her under graduation. Right now she is doing her post graduation and secured first class in first year. Out of 13 respondents eleven respondents have been exempted from Part II English. Eight respondents have got through their Part I Tamil paper and remaining five respondents have arrears in Part I Tamil. In Part III major papers except two respondents all others have got through with 40 percentage and above within which two respondents have secured first class with distinction. Majority have secured good marks since they have passion towards the subject they have chosen. Special courses have been designed by the department which was helpful for them to get through their major courses. Two physically challenged respondents have completed their Part V with 80 percentage and above. One respondent who is physically challenged have undergone a service learning program in collaboration with FPAI, Madurai. Except first years all others have completed their Value Based Courses with 50 percentage and above.
- Nine students are exempted from Part V and remaining three out of five students have completed their Part V program. Two students are currently doing and will be completing this semester.
- Short term/ a vocational course is not applicable for one student who is visually challenged. Four out of 13 is yet to do the course in the forthcoming semester. Short

term/vocational program is basically a skill based course which is more interesting compared to other activities when it comes to differently-abled students hence the remaining nine students have completed with an ease. These skills also increase their employability and recreation.

- 50 percentage of the respondents do not have soft skills where as 43 percentage of the respondents have learned Tally and Photoshop which is related to their major courses. Seven percentage of the respondents have completed PGDCA.
- Four out of 14 respondents have participated in the extracurricular activities in department and intercollegiate level. Not only participated but also won prizes in various competitions like debate, drawing, logo making and quiz this shows that they are self motivated.
- The researchers have listed certain problems which are faced by the respondents in their daily routine. The respondents have ranked the corresponding problems based on their disability which is as follows;
- Mingling with peer group in the same department is given the first rank by the respondents since their peer group is not lending their helping hands. Most of the respondents do not have self motivation hence they could up with the other students and have given second rank. Transportation between classes is ranked last (eighth) by the respondents.

Conclusion

It is concluded that college is proud to admit these special students for higher studies. College gives a very good learning environment for these students by providing an infrastructure required for them. Departments are also taking efforts in framing special courses for these differently-abled students to improve their academic performance that is why these students are performing well in their academics. Peer group is also lending their helping hand and giving moral support to them. These students hesitate to participate in the co curricular and extracurricular activities so opportunity has to be created to encourage and motivate them.

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